

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 NIC-01 AID-20

DRC-01 /109 W

----- 013318

R 231100Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9145

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

USSAG NKP

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 4143

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MCAF, LA

SUBJECT: NVA WITHDRAWAL

1. WE HAVE BEEN WATCHING CAREFULLY FOR INDICATIONS OF NVA COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAOS AGREEMENT AND PROTOCOL. IT NOW APPEARS THAT OVER THE PAST YEAR A SIGNIFICANT WITHDRAWAL OF NVA FORCES HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE. ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE, WE ASSESS THE SITUATION AS FOLLOWS:

2. NVA ORDER OF BATTLE. REGIMENTAL COMBAT UNITS TARGETTED AGAINST LAOS:

A. MR I

8TH REGIMENT (2 BNS.)

THERE IS SOME QUESTION REGARDING THE IDENTITY, PERHAPS EVEN THE EXISTENCE, OF THIS REGIMENT.

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B. MR II

866 REGIMENT (5 BNS)

335 REGIMENT (4 BNS)

THERE ARE TENTATIVE INDICATIONS THAT 335 MAY BE PREPARING TO
MOVE OUT OF LAOS.

UNITS WITHDRAWN:

174 REGIMENT (3 BNS APRIL 74)

148 REGIMENT (3 BNS JANUARY 74)

88 REGIMENT (3 BNS DECEMBER 73)

C. MR III

29 REGIMENT (2 BNS)

176 REGIMENT (3 BNS)

THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT 17#9#MAY BE DRAWING BACK FROM FORWARD
POSITIONS NEAR ROUTE 13 AND THE MEKONG. 29 REMAINS NEAR MUONG
PHALANE.

UNITS WITHDRAWN:

29 REGIMENT (1 BN) APRIL 1974

49 REGIMENT (3 BNS) MARCH 1973

D. MR IV

39 REGIMENT (3 BNS) 19 REGIMENT (2 BNS)

UNITS WITHDRAWN:

OV52 REGIMENT (3 BNS) JUNE 1973

9 REGIMENT (3 BNS) JANUARY 1974

102 REGIMENT (3 BNS) JUNE 1973

19 REGIMENT (1 BN) APRIL 1974

E. WE REPEAT THIS LIST INCLUDES ONLY UNITS TARGETTED AGAINST
LAOS, BUT DOES NOT INCLUDE FORCES IN GDRS OR THOSE TARGETTED
AGAINST SVN. OUR BEST INFORMATION INDICATES THAT THERE ARE ABOUT
7,000 TO 10,000 NVA COMBAT TROOPS (EXCLUDING AAA UNITS) TARGETTED
ON LAOS. BN SIZES ARE INCONSISTENT AND RANGE FROM 100 TO 600
PERSONNEL.

3. ALTHOUGH NO DISTINCTION IS MADE IN THE AGREEMENT OR PROTOCOL
BETWEEN NVA UNITS OPERATING AGAINST LAOS AND THOSE OPERATING
AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA OR THOSE SUPPORTING LOGISTICS
ACTIVITY ON THE TRAIL SYSTEM, WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH A DISTINC-
TION IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY SOPHISTICATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE NVA
POSITION HERE. IN OUR VIEW, THE NVA WILL MAKE THIS DISTINCTION

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AND OUR RESPONSE TO THIS PROBLEM OF A CONTINUED NVA PRESENCE IN
LAOS MUST BEAR IT IN MIND.

4. HERE AND IN WASHINGTON WE WILL SHORTLY BE ASKED TO COMMENT
ON THE NVA WITHDRAWAL OR LACK OF IT. IT IS OUR VIEW AT THIS TIME
THAT THE U.S. SHOULD TEMPER ITS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THIS ISSUE
AND AVOID POLEMICAL EXCHANGES WITH NORTH VIETNAM AND THE PATHET
LAO. WE WOULD SUGGEST MAKING THE FOLLOWING POINTS AFTER 4 JUNE

74:

A. THAT ALL U.S. MILITARY ADVISORS HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN, IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE ACCORD.

B. ALL THAI UNITS HAVE RETURNED TO THAILAND AND HAVE BEEN DEMOBILIZED.

C. THAT A SIGNIFICANT WITHDRAWAL OF NVA UNITS FORMERLY OPERATING AGAINST LAOS HAS TAKEN PLACE.

D. THAT NVA UNITS OPERATING AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM CONTINUE TO OCCUPY BORDER AREAS AND TO USE LAOS AS A SANCTUARY.

E. THAT WE HAVE AS YET NO INDICATION THAT NVA USE OF THE SO-CALLED HO CHI MINH TRAIL SYSTEM HAS CEASED.

F. THAT THE U.S. WELCOMES THE STEPS WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKEN SO FAR AND HOPES THAT DRV WILL HONOR TERMS OF ACCORD REACHED AMONG LAO AND THAT ALL COUNTRIES WILL RESPECT THE NEUTRALITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LAOS.

5. VIEWED FROM THE MISSION'S PERSPECTIVE, IT APPEARS TO BE IN THE U.S. INTEREST NOT TO GENERATE A DEGREE OF HEAT ON THIS ISSUE

WHICH CAN LEAD TO ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO OUR POSITION IN THIS COUNTRY. THE STATUS OF OUR ON-GOING MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THE PRESENCE OF A REDUCED BUT NOT INSIGNIFICANT DATT OFFICE, THE FUTURE STATUS OF U.S. CONTRACT AIR OPERATIONS, THE RELEASE OF EMMET KAY AND FINALLY THE OVERALL TONE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE PGNU ARE ALL MATTERS WHICH WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE STYLE WE ADOPT WITH REGARD TO A CONTINUING NVA PRESENCE IN LAOS. WE WOULD LIKE TO BE STRICT CONSTRUCTIONISTS BUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE NVA DEPLOYMENT IN THE GDRS OR IN THE SANCTUARIES BEING CHANGED
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AS A RESULT OF U.S. PROTESTS OR STATEMENTS APPREARS TO US TO BE VERY REMOTE. THE DRV IS HOWEVER VULNERABLE TO A DEGREE IN THE EYES OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS AND THERE ARE INDICATIONS THE PL ARE SENSITIVE TO THIS ISSUE. WE BELIEVE THEREFORE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD AVOID BEING STRIDENT WITH REGARD TO THIS DRV VIOLATION BUT SHOULD KEEP IT ALIVE IN A TEMPERATE MANNER.

6. THE AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE FOREGOING IN GENERAL TERMS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER 23 MAY. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, SOUVANNA WAS PLEASED TO LEARN THAT SOME THINNING OUT OF NVA UNITS HAD TAKEN PLACE. HE IS CLEARLY NOT CONCERNED AT THIS STAGE WITH NVA UNITS DODGING IN AND OUT OF LAO SANCTUARIES AND WHILE HE DEPLORES NVA USE OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM, HE RECOGNIZES THAT AMERICAN OR LAO STATEMENTS WILL HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THE SITUATION. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PGNU IS GOING TO BE VERY CAUTIOUS WITH REGARD TO THE

NVA ISSUE.
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OCT: #AS RECEIVED.

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NNN

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